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Fireside Chats

by TheWritingOwl

Summary

As Shulk travels across the Bionis, he oftentimes doesn't get a chance to just sit and think. However, when everything just seems to be going way to off the rails, he finally finds time to think while the group is camping in one of the caves of Valak Mountain. Sacrificing his sleep for a chance to calm his troubled mind, it seems that Shulk won't have as peaceful a night as he had hoped.

The fire crackled as Shulk sat pondering. The group had decided to try and traverse Valak Mountain in an attempt to get to the Mechonis. The future felt so uncertain. Shulk wasn't sure what they were going to do or how they were going to face the mechon. He had originally set out for revenge. When did this whole journey become so complicated?

His hands ghosted over the red sword laying in his lap. The monado was the only thing that could hurt mechon. So much mystery and uncertainty surrounded the weapon. Where did it come from? Easy, Zanza. His mind supplied. The giant that created the monado. But why did he make it? Another easy one, he made it to combat the Mechonis. But had he? The world just seemed to be turning upside down for the researcher. His visions weren't making anything any clearer. If anything, it just muddied the whole future up.

"Shulk?" A very feminine voice called, walking closer to him. The monado boy turned to see the High Entia princess walking toward him, rubbing her eyes sleepily. "It's late. Your watch should be done by now. Why are you still up?" She sat next to him, looking over at the blond. "Is something troubling you?"

He smiled, shaking his head. "Nothing is troubling me, Melia. I'm just having a rough time

sleeping is all." He leaned back, staring up at the ceiling of the cave they had chosen to stay in for the night. "You can go back to sleep if you'd like. I won't be getting any anytime soon." Blue eyes moved to watch the flames dance and twirl.

Melia frowned, standing up and startling Shulk slightly. "Alright, but… If you need to talk, I will listen." With a graceful turn she walked back to the rest of the group huddled together to conserve warmth. She settled back in her sleeping bag, leaving Shulk to his thoughts once again. Slowly they turned back to his visions. They were quite the pesky things. At times they were useful, allowing him to dodge a fatal blow or save one of his companions from a deadly strike. Other times they were confusing, leaving him with faint images and an oncoming headache from trying to understand it all.

A small yawn filled the cave as Shulk was broken out of his thoughts yet again. He turned, wondering just who was awake now only to find Riki stretching his little limbs and large ears from in the middle of the huddle. Blinking, the fluff ball waddled over toward Shulk, looking up at him with curious eyes. "Shulk? Why friend no sleep? Watch is done, yes?" He moved close to his Homs friend, worry evident in his eyes.

Shulk smiled at the Heropon, and shook his head. "I'm not really tired Riki, so I decided to take watch again and let some of the others sleep for a bit." A faint part of his mind felt bad lying to Riki, and he hoped to Bionis the Nopon would buy his lie.

Despite all of his hoping, Riki was not convinced. "Riki have many littlepons. Riki know when littlepon not want to sleep." For once showing just how wise their friend was despite the innocence shown, Riki walked over to Shulk and moved to cuddle up in his lap. "Riki stay until Shulk fall asleep like Riki do for littlepons." The warmth from Riki's small body was comforting for the Homs, making Shulk smile.

"Thanks Riki." The Heropon was already out like a light, comfortably curled against Shulk's sweater. The monado boy shook his head, rubbing the fur gently before going back to his thoughts. Everything was growing even more dangerous, and with the reveal of what faces really were… A whole slew of questions entered his mind. These were mechon who had killed other Homs. How could they be Homs as well? Why didn't she remember them? It all made absolutely no sense. Shulk nearly wanted to bang his head against the wall in frustration. There were too many uncertainties, too many possibilities for him to properly think.

"Shulk?" Another voice interrupted his musings. Turning, Shulk was surprised to see their sharpshooter up. "Shouldn't you be sleeping? I thought it was Reyn's turn for watch." Sharla crossed her arms, not looking pleased at the fact that the monado boy was still up.

Shulk shifted, careful not to jostle Riki too much in his lap. "I'm fine. Just not tired. I'm a bit surprised you're up, Sharla." It seemed that he wasn't going to have too peaceful of a night thinking if this kept up.

"Habit from travelling with you lot, I guess." Sharla glanced at Shulk before moving to her med bag and pulling something out. She held what seemed to be tea leaves and a cup. The raven haired woman poured the leaves into the cup before grabbing a thermos that had been sitting near the fire. Pouring the water carefully, she filled the cup before closing the thermos. Nodding in satisfaction, she handed the cup to Shulk. "There. Drink that. If you still can't fall asleep after an hour, wake me up." Yawning, Sharla walked back to where her sleeping bag laid, stretching all the way.

Shulk looked at the tea, surprised before smiling and giving quiet thank you. Taking a sip, he nearly gagged as the overwhelmingly bitter taste filled his mouth. Swallowing the sip carefully, he nearly balked at the prospect of drinking more. However, Sharla had taken the time to make it for

him so he might as well. Closing his eyes, he downed the drink in one go, shivering at the overwhelming taste.

It was nice, having so many people care for him, but Shulk didn't want to worry the others too much. He would be fine, he just needed to think. However, his thoughts kept wondering back to Prison Island. The whole ordeal changed his journey way too much for him to properly comprehend. He had had the vision about the events yet was helpless to stop most of it from coming true. What if it happened again? What if he had a vision of his party getting defeated and was helpless to stop it? What if… What if he had another situation like Fiora? Just thinking her name hurt his heart.

The fire danced as Shulk's eyes refused to close. His mind reeled a mile a minute. Often he had spent sleepless nights like this, thinking over just what the monado was or just how it functioned. Those were simpler times. Ones where the most he had to question was what the monado was and why it worked on mechon but not humans. Now the balance of all of Bionis seemed to hang on his shoulders, and it took a heavy toll.

It seemed that everyone was going to wake up at some point that night as Dunban was the next to awaken. "Shulk?" The elder asked, looking over at his charge in concern. "Is everything alright?" He had that tone that Shulk hadn't heard in a long time. One for when Shulk had had a nightmare or was sick. Shulk nearly smiled at the voice.

"I'm alright Dunban. Just thinking." He seemed to not have time for that lately. Everything moved too fast. He had to do this, save this person, deliver that item, fix Reyn's weapon, the list could go on for hours. It had been quite a while since he had time to just sit and think.

"I see. Don't let yourself get too wrapped up in your thoughts, Shulk. They may just lead you in circles." He moved to sit by the younger Homs, putting his good arm on his knee.

Shulk looked over at the hero, raising a brow. "Aren't you going to go back to sleep?" It seemed only logical to go back to a peaceful rest with someone else taking watch. The older Homs only shook his head, smiling.

"I don't need more sleep. Besides, it seems like you could use some company." It touched Shulk's heart that Dunban wanted to stay with him, even if the older knew the younger wouldn't talk. He simply needed to think for a while. His mind had to catch up with the rest of the world around him.

Closing his eyes, Shulk leaned back slightly on one of his arms, using the other to run a hand through Riki's fur. It was surprisingly soothing to do so, letting him repeat a simple, mindless action while thinking. What was going to happen now? For once Shulk wished he could have a vision of a happy future, one that he didn't need to stop from happening. He wanted nothing more than to just be done with it all, to have Fiora back with him. However, Bionis itself seemed to want to thwart his every chance at just living a peaceful life.

"Shulk." The boy looked over to see Reyn leaning down next to him, looking concerned. "You were zoned out pretty bad, mate. I think it's my turn for watch." The blond blinked owlishly at his ginger friend, looking over to find Dunban nodding off where he sat near Shulk. Riki still sat in his lap, curled toward Shulk's warmth.

"Oh." Careful not to jostle Riki, Shulk turned to smile at Reyn. "It's alright, Reyn. I can take your watch. I'm not that tired." He should have known better to try and convince Reyn that he wasn't tired, but it was worth a shot. Anything to keep from losing that train of thought and catching up with the current events.

Reyn frowned before shaking his head. Using his strength, he picked Shulk up rather easily, carrying him like one would a babe. “Hey! Reyn! What are you doing?! Put me down!” Shulk cried out, trying to keep his words subdued so the rest of the group wouldn’t wake up from the commotion.

“Nope. You’re going to get some sleep, Shulk.” The larger boy set Shulk and Riki down on the ground, right smack dab in the middle of the huddle of sleeping bags and people. “Bionis knows you need it as much as the rest of us.” Reyn moved back to his sleeping bag, curling into it with his back to Shulk. The monado boy was surprised how well the warmth flowed within the circle. Soon light footsteps and a deep grunt joined the group, Dunban moving back to his spot in the huddle of warmth. Everyone seemed so peaceful in their sleep, none bothered or haunted by the real life like they had normally been.

Slowly, Shulk’s eyes started to droop. It seemed the medicine Sharla had given him was working slowly. Unintentionally cuddling Riki closer, he closed his eyes and fell to sleep.

“I told you I could get him to go to sleep!”

“Alright, Reyn, you win. However, we all helped.”

“What do you mean? That was all Reyn, baby!”

“Sharla did provide him medicine, and Riki provided a source of warmth to help Shulk relax.”

“Big deal, I actually got him in bed.”

“By manhandling him.”

“Aw, Dunban! I thought you were on my side!”

“Everybody be quiet! We don’t want to wake him up!”

Shulk smiled. His group was quite silly, but they cared.

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